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"*Art is ever on the quest —*
A quest and a divine adventure"

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LOAN EXHIBITION

of Paintings, Watercolors, Drawings

Etchings & Sculpture

BY

ARTHUR B. DAVIES

Macbeth Galleries

450 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

1918

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IN PRAISE OF UNICORNS

"The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the crown:
The Lion beat the Unicorn all round the town." . . .

IN the golden book of wit and wisdom, "Through the Looking-Glass," the Unicorn rather disdainfully remarks that he had believed children to be fabulous monsters. Alice smilingly retorts: "Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too? I never saw one alive before!" "Well, now that we *have* seen each other," said the Unicorn, "if you 'll believe in me, I 'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?" "Yes, if you like," said Alice. No such ambiguous bargains are needed to demonstrate the existence of Unicorns. That is, not for imaginative people. A mythical monster, a heraldic animal, he figures in the dictionary as the Monoceros, habitat, India; and he is the biblical Urus, sporting one horn, a goat beard, and a lion's tail. He may be all these things for practical persons; no man is a genius to his wife. But maugre that he is something more for dreamers of dreams; though not the Hippogriff, with its liberating wings, volplaning through the Fourth Dimension of Space; nor yet is he tender Undine, spirit of fountains, of whom the Unicorn asked:

"By the waters of what valley has jealous mankind hidden the source of your secrets?" (Cousin german to the Centaur of Maurice de Guérin, he can speak in like cadence.)

Alice with her "dreaming eyes of wonder" was, after the manner of little girls, somewhat pragmatic. She believed in Unicorns only when she saw one. Yet we must believe without such proof. Has not the Book of Job put this question: "Canst thou bind the Unicorn with his band in the furrow?" As if a harnessed Unicorn would be credible. We prefer placing the charming monster, with the prancing tiny hoofs of ivory (surely Chopin set him to musical notation in his capricious second Etude in F; Chopin who, if man were soulless, would have endowed him with one), in the same category as the Chimera of "The Temptation of St. Antony," which thus taunted the Sphinx: "I am light and joyous! I offer to the eyes of men dazzling perspectives with Paradise in the clouds above. . . . I seek for new perfumes, for vaster flowers, for pleasures never felt before. . . ."

With Unicorns we feel the nostalgia of the infinite, the sorcery of dolls, the salt of sex, the vertigo of them that skirt the edge of perilous ravines, or

straddle the rim of finer issues. He dwells in equivocal twilights; and he can stare the sun out of countenance. The enchanting Unicorn boasts no favoured zone. He runs around the globe. He is of all ages and climes. He knows that fantastic land of Gautier, which contains all the divine lost landscapes ever painted, and whose inhabitants are the lovely figures created by art in granite, marble, or wood, on walls, canvas, or crystal. Betimes he flashes by the nymph in the brake, and dazzled, she sighs with desire. Mallarmé set him to cryptic harmonies, and placed him in a dim rich forest (though he called him a faun; a faun in retorsion). Like the apocryphal Sadhuzag in Flaubert's cosmical drama of dreams, which bore seventy-four hollow antlers from which issued music of ineffable sweetness, our Unicorn sings ravishing melodies for those who possess the inner ear of mystics and poets. When angered he echoes the Seven Thunders of the Apocalypse, and we hear of desperate rumours of fire, flood, and disaster. And he haunts those ivory gates of sleep whence come ineffable dreams to mortals.

He has always fought with the Lion for the crown, and he is always defeated, but invariably claims the

victory. The crown is Art, and the Lion, being a realist born, is only attracted by its glitter, not the symbol. The Unicorn, an idealist, divines the inner meaning of this precious fillet of gold. Art is the modern philosopher's stone, and the most brilliant jewel in this much-contested crown. Eternal is the conflict of the Real and the Ideal; Aristotle and Plato; Alice and the Unicorn; the practical and the poetic; butterflies and geese; and rare roast-beef versus the impossible blue rose. And neither the Lion nor the Unicorn has yet fought the battle decisive. Perhaps the day may come when, weariness invading their very bones, they may realise that they are as different sides of the same coveted shield; matter and spirit, the multitude and the individual. Then unlock the ivory tower, abolish the tyrannies of superannuated superstitions, and give the people vision, without which they perish. The divine rights of humanity, no longer of kingly cabbages.

The dusk of the future is washed with the silver of hope. The Lion and the Unicorn in single yoke. Strength and Beauty should represent the fusion of the Ideal and the Real. There should be no anarchy, no socialism, no Brotherhood or Sisterhood of man-

kind, just the millennium of sense and sentiment. What title shall we give that far-away time, that longed-for Utopia? With Alice and the Faun we forget names, so let us follow her method when in doubt, and exclaim: "Here then! Here then!" Morose and disillusioned souls may cry aloud: "Ah! to see behind us no longer, on the Lake of Eternity, the implacable Wake of Time!" nevertheless, we must believe in the reality of our Unicorn. He is Pan. He is Puck. He is Shelley. He is Ariel. He is Whim. He is Irony. And he can boast with Emerson:

> "I am owner of the sphere,
> Of the seven stars and the solar year,
> Of Cæsar's hand and Plato's brain,
> Of Lord Christ's heart and Shakespeare's strain."

From "Unicorns," by James Huneker, with the kind permission of the Author and Charles Scribner's Sons.

CATALOGUE

First Gallery

1 Winds of Corinth
2 Violin Girl
3 Madonna
4 At her Toilet
5 The Throne
6 Evening Star
7 Persian Panel
8 Flocks of Spring
9 Little Mattie
10 Energia
11 A Lake in the Sierras
12 Clothed in Dominion
13 Yielding Mists
14 The Glade
15 Hill to Hill
16 Before Sunrise
17 Frankincense
18 Mountains loved of Spring
19 Homage to the Ocean
20 Sleep
21 Children Dancing

22 Twilight Pastoral
23 After Rain
24 Rustle of Autumn
25 Ionia
26 Chanter's Mound

Second Gallery

27 Spring Ecstasy

28 Wing on the Sea

29 "Do Reverence — for I will breathe on thee with a favorable breeze, in love, or on the bright-visaged sea"

30 Adventure

31 The Great Mother

32 Mountaineers

33 Flume of Destiny

34 Out of the Dew

35 Alchemy

36 The Dawning (Decoration)

37 Dweller on the Threshold

38 Achaea, Greece

39 The Wine-Press

40 Unicorns

41 Decoration

42 Line of Mountains

43 Solitude

44 The Dancers (Sketch for Decoration)

45 Freshness of the Wounded

Large Gallery (downstairs)

Oils

1 Indian Fantasy
2 Study
3 Study
4 Sketches

Watercolors

1 The Glide
2 Processional
3 Study

Drawings

Small Gallery (downstairs)

ETCHINGS

1 Leda
2 Mirror
3 Summer
4 Nude seated Figure
5 Figure Group (women)
6 Reclining Figure
7 Portrait J.
8 Portrait (*small*)
9 Portrait
10 Head of Girl
11 Group of Five Men
12 Group of Men (one seated)
13 Group of Boys
14 Group of Ten Men
15 Ishlamish Group
16 Man and Woman
17 Struggle
18 Bathing Woman and Servant
19 Three Women (*oval*)
20 Three Women (*circular*)
21 Three Women in Landscape

22 Two Women in Landscape

23 Woman Running

24 Two Women Standing

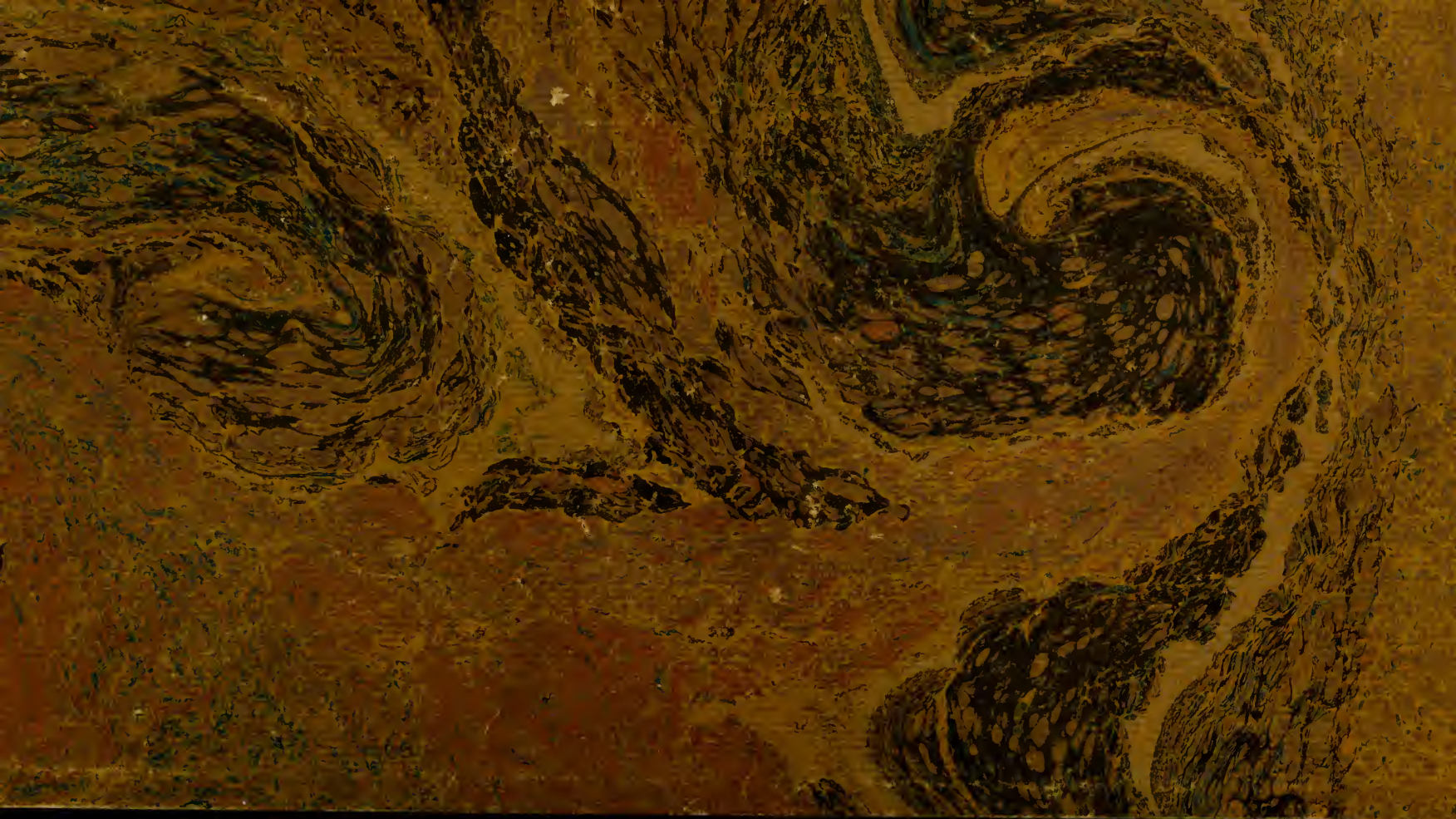
SCULPTURE

ILLUSTRATIONS

Violin Girl

At her Toilet

Children Dancing

Achaea, Greece

Hills and Valley, by Arthur B. Davies — *Addison Gallery*